

REMARKS

Entry of this Preliminary Amendment is respectfully requested.

This Preliminary Amendment cancels claims 1-12 directed to the apparatus, and amends independent claim 13 to correct ambiguities in the claim language but not in view of any prior art. New claims 26-30 have been added and are believed to be patentable.

It is requested that all of the claims in the application be given a Notice of Allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

KINNEY & LANGE, P.A.

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By

  
Z Peter Sawicki, Reg. No. 30,214

THE KINNEY & LANGE BUILDING  
312 South Third Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1002  
Telephone: (612) 339-1863  
Fax: (612) 339-6580

ZPS:cnj

**APPENDIX:  
MARKED UP VERSION OF SPECIFICATION AND CLAIM AMENDMENTS**

13. (Amended) A process for coating particles comprising:

providing an insert within an upward flowing fluid bed dryer or granulator with a screen across the bottom of the dryer or granulator, the insert comprising a vertically adjustable cylindrical partition located substantially on a vertical axis of the granulator or dryer, a spray nozzle with a heated liquid line and an atomizing gas line connected thereto which is positioned such that a liquid is sprayed within the adjustable cylindrical partition, the spray nozzle being positioned in a non-heat conducting relation to the bottom screen, the spray nozzle being located substantially on the vertical axis;

loading the dryer with a bed of particles;

adjusting the cylindrical partition such that the position of the top of the cylindrical partition is above the bed of particles and product [container] can be removed [out] from the dryer;

adjusting the spray nozzle such that a spray zone is created within the cylindrical partition;

providing a gas to fluidize the bed of particles through the bottom screen;

providing an atomizing gas which is processed through the spray nozzle;

providing a liquid which is atomized through the spray nozzle;

contacting the particles with the liquid from the spray nozzle within the cylindrical partition and [coating] spray zone;

drying the particles [in the reconditioning zone] in an area outside the partition;

and

circulating the particles from the fluidized bed up through the cylindrical partition, down through the drying zone and back into the

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fluidized bed until a selected amount of liquid is coated onto the particles.

26. (New) A process for coating particles comprising:
- providing a cylindrical insert whose central axis is disposed in a vertical direction within an upward flowing fluid bed dryer such that fluidized particles within the fluid bed dryer travel upwardly through the insert, and a spray nozzle supplied with heated liquid such that a liquid is sprayed within the cylindrical insert, and the spray nozzle being disposed in a non-heat conducting relation with regard to a bottom screen within the fluid bed dryer, the spray nozzle being located substantially along the central axis of the cylindrical insert;
  - loading the dryer with particles to be coated;
  - adjusting the cylindrical partition's vertical position within the fluid bed dryer;
  - adjusting the spray nozzle such that a spray zone is created within the cylindrical insert;
  - fluidizing the particles with a gas stream in an upward direction such that particles travel through the cylindrical insert;
  - providing an atomized liquid through the spray nozzle to coat the particles within the cylindrical insert;
  - permitting the particles to dry outside of the cylindrical partition; and
  - recirculating the particles through the cylindrical insert until a selected amount of liquid is coated onto the particles.
27. (New) The process of claim 26 wherein the liquid for coating the particle includes a liquid fat or hot melt.

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28. (New)        The process of claim 26 wherein the spray nozzle is positionable within the cylindrical insert or below the bottom edge of the cylindrical insert.

29. (New)        The process of claim 13 wherein the cylindrical insert is positioned so that coated particles can be withdrawn from the dryer without having to remove the insert.

30. (New)        A method for coating particles within a dryer that is capable of fluidizing a bed of particles, the method comprising:

positioning a cylindrical partition having an axis extending concentrically therein such that the axis is disposed vertically with respect to upward flow of gas through the cylindrical partition creating a coating zone within the partition and above the partition and a drying zone outside of the coating zone;

positioning a spray nozzle along the axis of the cylindrical partition for spraying a coating solution onto the particles such that the spray from the nozzle coats the particles within the partition and in an area above the partition;

fluidizing the bed of particles such that particles flow through the partition in an upward fashion for coating and travel upwardly and outside of the coating zone and then downwardly settling outside of the partition and coating zone for drying creating a coating cycle; and

repeating the coating cycle until a selected amount of coating is placed onto the particle.